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### Boating season is here -- ready or not

By: Tom Watts, Macomb Daily Staff Writer

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Staff photo by Ray J. Skrowonek

**These are busy days for Lake St. Clair marinas as warm weather begins to settle in and boats come out of storage. At Land's End Marina in Harrison Township, boats emerged Friday from winter dry dock.**

Low water levels and high gas prices aside, the 2001 boating season on Lake St. Clair is here - ready or not.

For grocer Jim Dennison that means getting his Montgomery Ward Sea King motor boat into the water as soon as possible.

"I've been doing this for 25 years," said Dennison, 39, of Sterling Heights. "It's relaxing - the boating and fishing part."

Dennison, a produce manager at Kroger, brought his 8-year-old son, Adam, to the Harley Ensign public access site on Lake St. Clair last week for an evening of cruising and walleye fishing.

"There's not a lot of boats zipping by right now," Dennison said, "so we can go out and enjoy it."

Adam, a second-grade student at Jack Harvey Elementary School in Sterling Heights, said he likes boating with his father, but only when the water's smooth.

"No waves," Jim Dennison said of his son, "like it is today. It's not too bad

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out there."

Defining "bad" may differ from one person to another. But boaters such as the Dennisons will once again have to deal with low water levels this summer.

"The water appears to be high after a rain event, but we're still 13 inches below the long term average for Lake St. Clair," said Adam Fox, a hydrologist in the Detroit office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

"We are 2 inches above the average for this time last month (April)," Fox continued, "but we're also 2 inches below where we were this time last year."

Fox said Lake St. Clair will experience up to a 1- or 2-inch rise in water levels through June, and that's "wishful thinking."

Many marinas, rivers, county drains and private canals have been dredged, which should be an advantage for boaters this year, Fox said. And heavy rainfall this year means it is unlikely Lake St. Clair will experience record low water levels like last year.

"What they see is what they're going to get," Fox said. "Considering the amount of dredging that has taken place since last year, it should be a better summer. But people who are waiting for their canals to fill up can stop waiting. They can't hold out anymore. It's not going to get any higher to make a difference."

If it's not the water levels then gas prices are getting to boaters on Lake St. Clair.


This time last year, Land's End Marina in Harrison Township was charging boaters \$1.99 per gallon. On Thursday, the price at the dock was \$2.39 a gallon.

"It's expected to drop," marina manager Alex Love said. "We've seen it before."

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